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**URBAN LIGHT**  
MINISTRIES



**FATHERING  
STRONG**

## **Engaging Dads Where They Are**

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*What is it going to take to make a difference?*



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# The Need

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## Children Need Good Dads

An article written by Bob Griffin stated the real problem; *"The need for a father is on an epidemic scale, and the 'father deficit' should be treated as a public health issue."*



According to the 2020 U.S. Census, 18.4 million children are living without a biological father. Out of the 73 million children in the U.S., 25% are without a father in the home. Since 1968, this number has doubled and continues to increase.

The report entitled, "**Fathering Strong - The Real Epidemic Today**," reviews the latest statistics on the effects of absent fathers. The research is overwhelming and makes the point with unequivocal evidence that children need good dads.

Urban Light Ministries, a Christian-based nonprofit, has over 30 years of experience working with thousands of fathers and facilitating a wide variety of fathering programs. Young men entering these programs seek the nurturing and counseling they never received from their fathers. The majority of these men do not have a relationship with Christ nor understand the positive impact this relationship can have on their lives and the lives of their children.

Fatherlessness is the root cause of most of the troubles in today's society. This "*Fatherlessness Pandemic*" is why **Fathering Strong** was created. **Fathering Strong** is an online platform that brings together a diverse community of men to encourage, inspire, learn from, and mentor one another so that they can become their best as fathers while building stronger families and communities in which they live.

## Reaching Fathers Where They Are

In today's digital world, the best way to stay connected with young fathers is through their smartphones. Eighty-five percent of all U.S. adults own a smartphone. Each day they spend an average of over three hours on their phones and check them over 58 times. Smartphone automatic notifications are the most effective means of reaching the target audience for Fathering Strong and provide continual reminders of the importance of being a good father.

The purpose of Fathering Strong is to be a resource of information and provide the necessary tools to become a better father. Fathering Strong helps create a community where men can encourage, inspire and learn from each other. The most effective way to do this is to reach men where they are multiple times per day - on their smartphones.



Fathering Strong is a web-based community with a smartphone app where men can engage both online and in person within their communities. The program provides many ways to connect whether it be by interests, stages of life, or geography. Each point of connection drives accountability and is easily administered and controlled within the program.



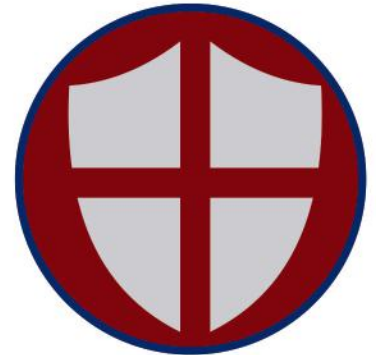
**Smartphones have become the strongest tool of mass communication.**

*Social Media and Youth Engagement  
Dr. Ramesh Sharmar*

# What is Fathering Strong?

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*Fathering Strong is an online community where dads can share their stories, and learn from others, as they become better fathers through building mutually beneficial relationships with other fathers and with Jesus Christ while applying biblical principles.*



Fathering Strong is an online platform and community that connects fathers allowing them to build relationships with others and be a part of building stronger families. It is also for those seeking the need for a father figure. It is putting together all of the functionality and engagement of a Facebook Group, Social Media platform, live event program, online course platform, and content platform in one place that is controlled and moderated by individuals experienced in fatherhood programs. It provides notifications on upcoming events, updates, or new conversations directly to the user's smartphone. It is also web-based and can be accessed on any device connected to the internet such as a desktop, laptop, or tablet.

This resource is **free of charge** to all participants and is funded through donations and private partnerships. Some parts of the community are private based on certain interests or groups and are invitation-only. Other areas of the site are available to all users. The access and privileges are based on how the group moderators and discussion leaders wish to set them. This maintains privacy and accountability within the areas of the site where it may be required.

The primary targets for Fathering Strong include:

- 👤 Young Fathers
- 👤 First-time Fathers
- 👤 Expectant Fathers
- 👤 Reentering Fathers
- 👤 Non-resident Fathers
- 👤 Unfathered Men
- 👤 Single Fathers
- 👤 Stay-at-Home Fathers
- 👤 Experienced Fathers Seeking to become mentors/disciples

# What is Fathering Strong?

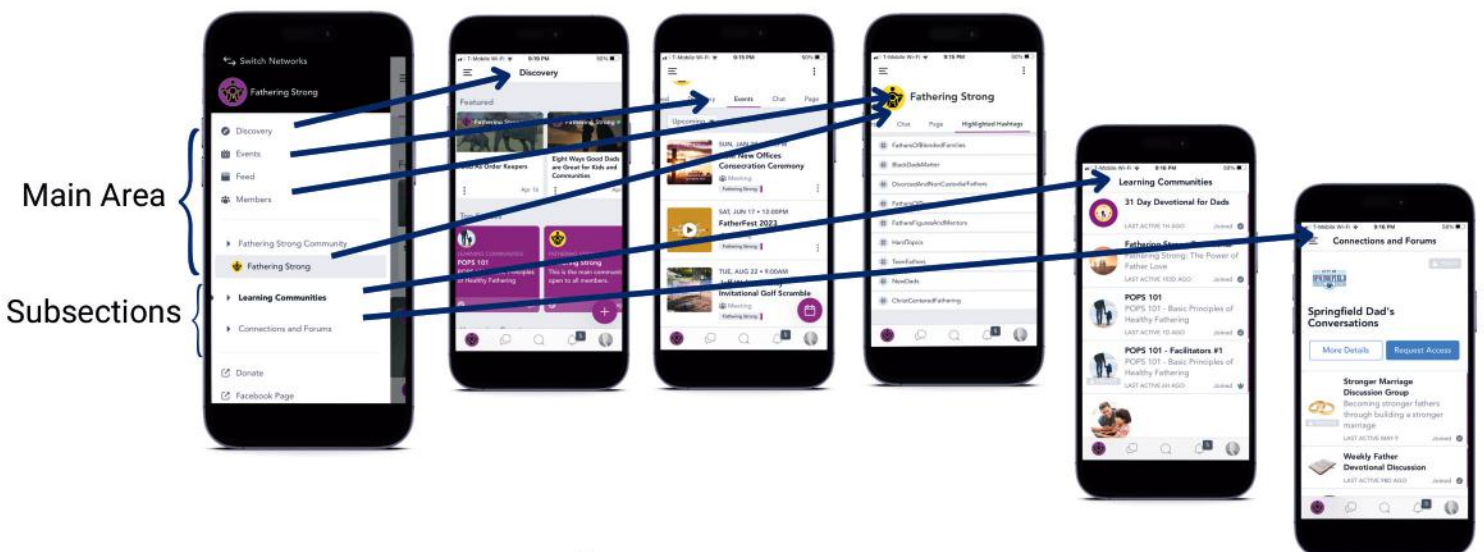
*Fathering Strong is an interactive and engaging multi-platform online community*

With so many children growing up fatherless, the need for good fathers is greater today than ever before. The good news is that many men are seeking support and affirmation in their quest to becoming great dads. Fathering Strong was created to connect fathers to each other and strengthen their relationship with the Heavenly Father. In doing so, we envision the number of present, mature, and responsible fathers increasing, and therefore, so will the number of nurtured children and stable families.



The site is currently divided into **three main areas** that are easy to navigate on any device.

1. The main, "**all member access area**", includes the latest information on topics addressing fatherhood and fathering skills. The information can be found in the "Discover section," main feed, or featured posts. An event section is also included in the main Fathering Strong community highlighting any events that are open to all members.
2. The second section titled "**Learning Communities**" includes courses that are either self-taught or led by a designated trained leader or facilitator.
3. The third major section titled, "**Connections and Forums**" is the place for building specialized groups based on certain topics, interests, locations, or other ways of bringing fathers together with common interests.



# What is Fathering Strong?

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## The Online Community

The Fathering Strong Community is open to all members to discover information important to becoming a better father. The primary sections include post feeds, discovery section of top posts, events - both online and local, chat with other members and searchable content by main topic areas using the highlighted hashtags.

### Fathering Strong Online Community

Feed	Discovery	Events	Chat	Highlighted Hashtags
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*Resources, events and chats that are available to the entire network. Filtered by featured content, top posts, and topic hashtags.*

*Available to everyone enrolled in Fathering Strong*

### Learning Communities

Study groups or courses based on specific topics and lead by an instructor or learning leader. Some courses are also self-study.

*Both Public and Private Learning Communities*

### Connections and Forums

Mini-subset communities based on specific needs that have their own resources and feeds, events, chats and private hashtags and monitored by a leader or moderator.

*Both Public and Private Groups and Forums*

The "Learning Communities" are dedicated to providing education on specific fatherhood topics through self-study or guided learning. Each of the courses offered is its own "mini-network" that includes all of the features of the overall Fathering Strong community such as events, chat, and topic areas.

The "Connections and Forum" sections are "mini-networks" with full functionality that is either open to the entire Fathering Strong network or private for specific interest groups. The private groups provide a platform for more intimate discussions and conversations that are only available to members of that specific group. Full functionality including a discovery section, events section, chat, and highlighted hashtags can be activated for any group. Each private group has a specified set of moderators that maintain the confidentiality of the group and approve entry into the group. Connections or forums are developed based on needs and requests.



# Ways to Connect with Fathering Strong

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There are many ways to get started and begin connecting with other fathers and resources. These include:

## Group Participation

Find a group under Connections and Forums that resonates with the issues you are currently facing. Reach out to the moderator and ask to be invited into the group. Note: some of the groups were formed based on specific needs or current private groups and may not be open to anyone that requests them.

## Study Groups

Review the different offerings in the Learning Community and find one that interests you. Complete the ones that are self-study or ask the group leader access to ones that are private. Note: some groups were formed for specific reasons and may not be open to anyone that requests them.

## Events

Locate online events or live events in your geographic area. Register and attend the events.

## Review the Many Articles and Posts

There is information that can help you become a better father that is categorized by major topics under the "highlighted hashtag" heading in the main Fathering Strong community. This information is updated every week with the latest trends and research on fatherhood.

## Make Your Own Post or Comment

Start a conversation with others in the network. The more you engage the more you will get out of the community. You will find inspiration in meeting others dealing with the same issues as you and who can provide you with insight and encouragement.

## Mentoring or Connecting with Experts

Plans are under development to add a Mentoring section to the community where you can become a mentor to a father looking for assistance or you can sign up for a mentor if you are interested. Coming Soon!

# Building the Kingdom Together

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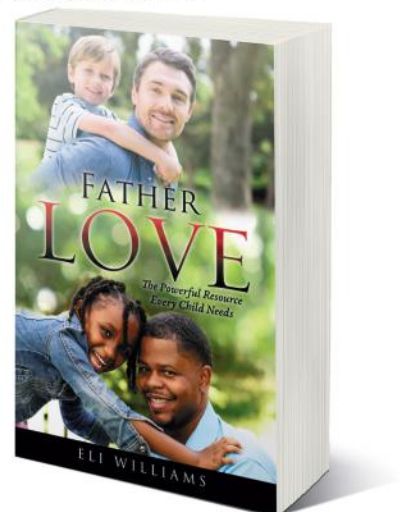
*The mission of Fathering Strong is based on Malachi 4:6 where we endeavor to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.*

The greatest example of fathering is our Heavenly Father. Through the Holy Bible, we are given the greatest guidebook to fatherhood.

Being a man isn't about proving to others how strong and capable you are. That's ego. Being a man, and especially being a father, is about knowing how dependent you are on others to do your job well. Particularly how dependent you are on God. You are not meant to do this alone. **Fathering Strong** is your connection to others and a way to build a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

As stated in Eli Williams's book, Father Love -The Powerful Resource Every Child Needs, "A father's heart is filled with love for his children and is a powerful resource for them. That love can and should be nurtured in fathers." This can only be done through having a relationship with Christ. Fathering Strong builds on the fatherly responsibilities that God has assumed toward his children. Some biblical examples include:

- **God provides for us** - *Philippians 4:19*: And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.
- **God protects** - *John 17:11*: I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.
- **God encourages us** - *Psalms 10:17*: You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.
- **God comforts us** - *2 Corinthians 1:3-4*: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.
- **God disciplines us** - *Hebrews 12:10*: They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.



# Connecting with Fathers in Need

## Leveraging Digital Marketing to Connect

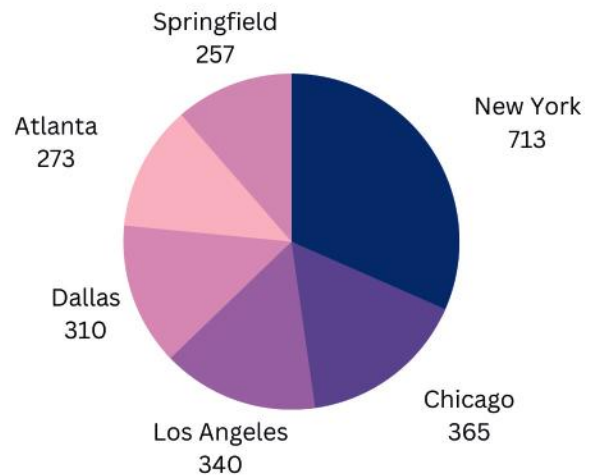
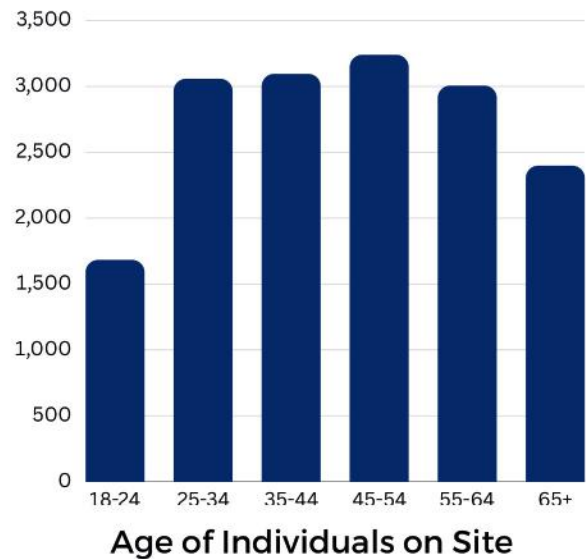
Over the past 12 months, Urban Light Ministries has used the Google Ad Grant to reach individuals interested in fatherhood and receiving resources to help them become better fathers. Over 21,000 individuals have come to the site through Google Search. Over 4,000 have downloaded the 30-Day Fatherhood Devotional.

Website views have originated from all over the country including major cities such as New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and Los Angeles (see pie chart). People are seeking to learn how to become better fathers. The post on "Bible Verses for Fathers," has been viewed over 10,000 times. Web analytics prove that men of all ages are seeking help on how to become better fathers, grandfathers, and mentors to their families and communities (see bar chart).

Fathering Strong will continue to leverage the Google Ad Grant with a focused marketing strategy to lead people to the Fathering Strong community. Email marketing through the use of automated sequences and email campaigns will drive enrollments by using targeted landing pages with infographics and information guides to encourage email address submissions and signups.



Results from Google Ads - Past 12 months



Searches in Major Cities

(Home location - Springfield, OH - compared to other major cities)

## Current Available Resources

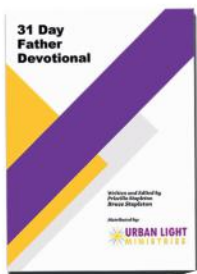
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Before the global COVID pandemic, Urban Light Ministries was developing fatherhood resources focused on online delivery. Through the experience of delivering online self-study courses, it became clear that a better way was required to increase participation and engagement. Building an online community where fathers can communicate and engage with others was important to building the bonds and driving participation. Fathering Strong is built on an online community platform that improves engagement and program adherence.

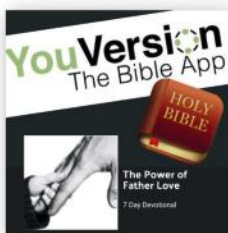
The following resources are available on Fathering Strong:



POPS 101 is an introduction to healthy fathering principles. POPS is an acronym that stands for Protector, Order keeper, Provider and Stabilizer. This online study course includes a facilitators guide for group settings and is in both English and Spanish.



The 31-Day Father's Devotional Journal was developed to provide the opportunity for fathers to search their own hearts and soul to see if the instructions they are providing their children are in accordance with the will of God. The devotionals address the need to teach, encourage, instruct, mentor, praise, influence, guide, and inspire.



The Power of Father Love 7-Day Devotional is hosted on YouVersion and was created to encourage, enthuse and empower men to be the best versions of themselves in their roles as fathers. The series offers men practical suggestions for growth as nurturers and spiritual leaders of their children and families.



The Good Dad Award is a non-profit national program that recognizes fathers from all walks of life. The mission of the award is to raise awareness and promote good fatherhood through a positive and meaningful recognition that can inspire and motivate others. The Good Dad Award™ is an annual award honoring the accomplishments and sacrifices of fathers in local communities. This program has been administered through Urban Light Ministries for the past two years and will be promoted on Fathering Strong.

# Finding Their Place in Fathering Strong

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Once someone joins the Fathering Strong community they are placed into an email sequence that will provide them with a step-by-step guide on how to get the most out of the online community.

The welcome steps will include:

**1**

**Welcome message and information on the community including code of conduct**

**2**

**Automated guide built in the community that will provide a sequence of steps to :**

- Complete their profile
- Download the smartphone app
- Adjust their notifications
- Introduce themselves
- Start a Chat
- Invite Someone to the Network

**3**

**Take an introduction questionnaire to identify how they can best get involved which includes information on;**

- Describing their past and current relationship with their father
- Identifying their fatherhood journey including relationships, number of children, and current living arrangements
- A self-assessment of what is their maturity level as a Christian
- Identification of what they hope to achieve from joining Fathering Strong

This information will be held in confidence and used to place Fathering Strong members into the appropriate communities and forums.



# Partnering Opportunities

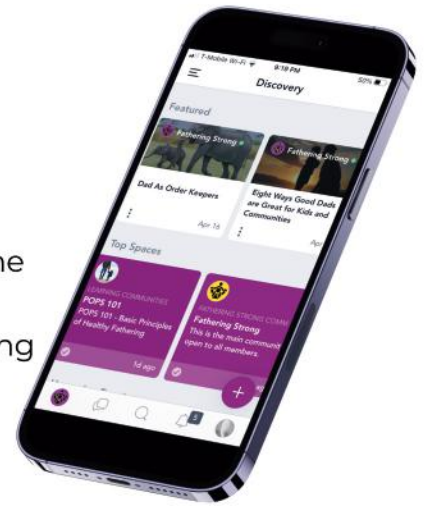
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God provided you the skills you need to make a difference in this world. How will you use yours?

Fathering Strong provides many different ways you and/or your organization can get involved. As we continue to grow the community we need your help. We seek partners that can provide the skills, resources, and funding to help grow Fathering Strong and reach as many fathers as possible.

Some of the different ways you can partner with Fathering Strong include:

- Become a course or community moderator
- Facilitate a devotional group or study group
- Help establish and/or lead a new community or forum
- Be a podcast guest or guest blogger
- Become a fatherhood resource provider
- Become a mentor and help other fathers in need
- Host online discussions or live meet sessions
- Provide links on your website to Fathering Strong
- Pray for the community and the fathers in the Fathering Strong network
- Be a financial supporter



# What Is It Going to Take?

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Get involved with building the online community where fathers can join together to build stronger families and stronger communities.

Fathering Strong is an online community where you can build relationships with other fathers and become a part of building stronger families. It is a place for resources, connections and outreach.

01

## Join the community

Go to [FatheringStrong.com](http://FatheringStrong.com) to sign up. It's free to join.

02

## Participate in discussion

Once you sign up, complete your profile and begin engaging with others in the community. Find topics and groups that best meet your needs.

03

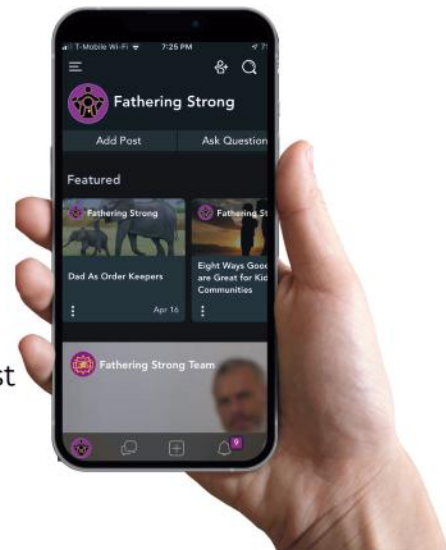
## Build groups of like minded men

Join groups of individuals just like yourself who are experiencing the same issues and challenges and discover ways to enrich your fathering.

04

## Actively participate

Don't sit back and watch. Get involved. The value of the community is in the participation. Build online and local groups where you can share your stories and learn from others.



## Powered by Urban Light Ministries

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Fathering Strong is an online community where dads can share their stories' and learn from others as they become better fathers through building mutually beneficial relationships with other fathers and with Jesus Christ.

Document prepared by:

Eli Williams - *President and CEO*, Urban Light Ministries

Bruce Stapleton - *President, Movementum Group and Board Chair*, Urban Light Ministries

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We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the Heavenly Father

## Contact Information



[www.fatheringstrong.com](http://www.fatheringstrong.com)

[www.urbanlight.org](http://www.urbanlight.org)

@fatheringstrong